

THE DROPOUT PROBLEM AND THE ATTITUDES OF DROPOUTS
OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, COLORADO

by

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INTRODUCTION

One of the goals for American youth which has gained rather wide acceptance is the completion of high school. Substantial progress has been made in achieving this goal. An increasing proportion of our youth enter and graduate from the high schools of our nation.

A multiplicity of studies has been conducted to determine factors that influence the early school leaver. These studies have sought to identify characteristics or factors that would allow the school to provide adjusted curricula that would prevent early withdrawal from school.

Other studies have attempted to compare early school leavers with their contemporaries who graduated. In comparing the two groups, it was hoped that such comparisons covering selected personal characteristics and educational and social factors, would identify traits that would differentiate between the two groups.

Because of inadequacies, omissions, or an erroneous premise, some of these studies have not been of a highly significant nature. Some recently completed surveys nullify some correlations that previously were implied. Therefore in the literature many differences are found and the problem of school dropouts still exists.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The dropout problem is complicated inasmuch as the same factors may have several implications, depending on the time and

the individual pupil (Tessner, 59, p. 143). The same pupil may react differently, at different times, to the same factor.

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to review literature and studies concerning the dropout problem, and (2) to determine which factors were evident in the dropouts at the junior high school level in Jefferson County, Colorado and their implications for the educational program.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

A dropout is an individual who left school before graduation from the twelfth grade.

Voluntary dropouts are those over which school administrators can exercise a certain amount of control.

Involuntary dropouts are those over which school administrators have no control, including such reasons as physical disability, deceased, drafted, etc.

A junior high school is described as a school which includes seventh, eighth, and ninth grades as a unit.

A continuation student is one who is participating in a program for continued education on a part-time basis, while holding a full-time job and still of school age.

Class A cities have a population of 200,000 to 1,000,000. Class B cities have a population of over 1,000,000 (53).

THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

The Overall Picture

In 1928-29, out of every 1000 students in the ninth grade, 492 graduated from high school. Of 1000 who entered ninth grade in 1952-53, 673 survived to graduate in 1956 (70).

Only slightly more than one-half of all fifth grade pupils finish high school; less than two-thirds of those in the ninth grade remain through grade twelve, NEA Research Bulletin (41). At the present time, 1,200,000 secondary school students terminate their education each year prior to graduation. This figure is expected to rise to 1,300,000 by 1965 (47).

In a study of 10,000 dropouts, it was found they left school at the following ages: 10 per cent under age 16, 34 per cent at age 16, 27 per cent at age 17, 17 per cent at age 18, and 12 per cent at 19 years and over (59). Dropouts tended to leave school upon reaching the legal permissible age of 16. One out of three had left at this age. The fact that a large group drops out at an age already beyond the usual graduation age points to a substantial amount of retardation in school activities.

In looking at the highest grade the dropouts attained, it was found that 31 per cent attained eighth grade or less, 30 per cent reached ninth grade, and 39 per cent dropped out in the tenth or eleventh grade. These figures reveal that one in three dropouts did not get beyond eighth grade, and two out of three never reached senior high school. They had dropped out before

most kinds of vocational information and other facets of counseling and guidance normally were available.

In a four-year study in large cities, it was found that holding power for Class A cities was 62.9 per cent and for Class B cities was 54.7 per cent (53). If the involuntary dropouts were not included in this study, then the holding power percentages would have been 71.5 per cent for a Class A city and 62 per cent for a Class B city, respectively.

The voluntary dropout percentages are higher than the involuntary. The percentage for the voluntary was 82.6 while 17.4 per cent were involuntary which included such reasons as physical disability, uneducable, drafted, deceased, institutionalized, and left school and whereabouts unknown. Voluntary reasons stated in Segal's study were employment, disinterest and school failure, inability to adjust, married, enlisted in armed forces, and needed at home.

The major concern has been concentrated on the dropout with lower ability. But the capable student may also be among the high school dropouts. In one study of 165 students with I. Q.'s of 120 or over, 29 students, or 17.6 per cent, were dropouts. These 29 were 3.9 per cent of all those who were voluntary dropouts (65).

Review of the Studies on the Status of the Dropout

The Socioeconomic Factor. The Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 1960 (26), states that the earlier studies on school

dropouts emphasized the social and economic factors, while recent studies in the United States emphasized educational factors. This being true, numerous studies are in print as to the importance or nullification of this factor.

Hand (25) conducted a study in 70 secondary schools in Illinois and found that 72 per cent of all youth who dropped out of high school came from families low on the income scale.

Johnson and Legg (29) concluded that parents with low socioeconomic status were more common among dropouts.

Murk (40) found that 70 per cent of dropouts were from homes where the breadwinner was in an unskilled job, while Young (71) found that 84 per cent of 184 dropouts came from homes of laborers, unemployed parents, or public welfare cases.

Thomas (60) did an empirical study and found a correlation of .59 between dropouts and their socioeconomic class.

Brewer (6) related the section of the city with the dropout students, and found that the largest number of dropouts came from the section of the city characterized by low income families, sub-standard housing, and mixed nationalities.

Snepp (56) rated homes as good, weak, and broken by divorce or death. He found that over 70 per cent of dropouts were from the category of weak or broken homes. Only 19.3 per cent were from "good" homes.

Evraiff (20) did not find economic reasons a great motivation for leaving school full-time. He found that less than one-third of the boys stated they left because of financial reasons.

Livingston (33) found the occupation of the breadwinner to be an insignificant factor in relation to a student dropping out.

Several studies have been made in parental attitudes and their relationship to school persistence. Schreiber (52) stated that two-thirds of the dropouts' parents had either a negative or an indifferent attitude toward school, whereas almost 100 per cent of the parents of stay-ins felt that a young person would be seriously handicapped if he did not possess a high school education.

NEA research (41) found parents unimpressed by the value of an education. Mannino (34) did not find any difference in mothers' attitudes toward education between dropouts and others, but he did find a difference in means of encouragement used to keep the student in school.

Pupil Mobility. Segal (53) was concerned with the large amount of student transfer in the whole student population. He felt this might be a difficult disruption in a student's program. He found that not only a large number of dropouts had attended several schools, but a large number of graduates had attended two or more schools during the last four years of study.

The dropouts in DeKalb, Illinois (40) were predominantly from mobile families. Only 13 per cent were educated exclusively in DeKalb schools. Snapp (56) found at least one-half of the dropouts had moved a number of times.

In Young's study in Tucson (71), of the 184 who did not report to grade ten after ninth grade graduation, 45.1 per cent had left the city.

Evraiff (20), in a study of 72 regular students matched with the same number of continuation students, found the transient factor insignificant. The number of years lived in the community was found in favor of the continuation student.

Educational and Grade Retardation. Failure in the elementary school was found to be a hastening factor for dropping out of school in Dresher's study (17). This would indicate poor school achievement.

Snepp (56), in a study of 159 dropouts who had been given the California Achievement Test or Iowa Silent Reading Test, found that 21 per cent were three or more years retarded in reading, 26.6 per cent were retarded two years, and 22 per cent were retarded one year. The remaining 30 per cent were normal or better. He found that 60 per cent had been on the failure list.

Wolfbein (69), in a study of 10,000 dropouts, found that 85 per cent of them were behind their age group by at least one year, and 53 per cent were behind two years.

Students who were withdrawing from grades eight, nine, and ten, were characterized by grade retention, poor academic records, and little pupil participation (13).

Penty (44) found three times as many poor readers, 49.9 per cent, as good readers among dropouts. In a regular student population, approximately 15 per cent will be poor readers. There was less leaving among the students who received special help in reading. NEA (41) research stated that the reading problem is magnified in upper grades and creates a feeling of frustration in

the student. They also found the leaving student was retarded by two years. Evraiff (20), using matched I. Q. scores, found the regular student made a mean grade of 3.09 (C plus) and the continuation student a mean grade of 2.84 (high D).

The I. Q. of the Dropout. Most studies reveal that the I. Q. of the dropout is considerably lower than that of the average student, but Kuhlen (31) found that they were not so low in intelligence for the most part but that they could be educated.

Young (71), in a study of 184 dropouts, found the I. Q.'s to range from 67 to 107. The average was 87 and the median was 82.

In a large-scale study, Wolfbein (69) concluded that the school leavers could be differentiated rather sharply on the basis of I. Q.'s. The proportion with scores of less than 85 was three times as great for the dropout student. Only one in 16 dropouts had an I. Q. of over 110.

Using 208 dropouts, Snapp (56) found that 66 per cent scored below 96 I. Q. and 23 per cent had an I. Q. of 80 or below. Murk (40) found 63 per cent had I. Q.'s of 90 or above.

Average I. Q. of the dropout in a study by Cantoni (10) was found to be 92.3 points and the graduate I. Q. was 101.6, which he felt was not significant.

The student with a higher I. Q. does find some place in the dropout picture. In a study of 165 students (65) with an I. Q. of 120 and over, 29 students or 17.6 per cent became dropouts. The most common reason for talented girls leaving was marriage or dislike for school.

Although I. Q. and dropouts do not correlate 100 per cent, Thomas (60) found the correlation was .91.

Age of Leaving School. The critical age for dropping out of school appears to be age 16. Wolfbein (69) found that one in three dropouts chose to leave at age 16, which is the legal age in a majority of the states. The percentages for the different ages are as follows: 10 per cent left before age 16, 27 per cent at age 17, 17 per cent at age 18, and 12 per cent at age 19. One in eight leaves after the usual graduation age.

Snepp (56) found similar percentages. Of the 7.7 per cent who left school at age 15, 13 were girls, eight of whom were married, two in poor health, and three of whom were pregnant.

Snepp (56) found highest dropout rates in the junior year at 38.9 per cent. Sophomores left at the rate of 28.9 per cent, freshmen accounted for 17.3 per cent, and senior year students at 15.8 per cent.

In general terms, two out of three leavers never reached the senior high school. One out of three did not get beyond the eighth grade. The Bureau of Labor survey (69) found that dropouts at grade eight accounted for 31 per cent; grade nine, 30 per cent; and senior high school, 39 per cent.

Studies done only in the area of senior high school, therefore, do not accurately picture the dropout, since other factors may operate in the higher grades more than they do in junior high school.

Post-School Jobs and Earnings. Seven out of ten boys, dropouts or graduates, found work within a month after the initial search (69). The boys' employment was nearly the same on the first job whether a graduate or not. Sixteen per cent of the dropouts were making under \$40 a week and 4 per cent of the graduates drew that salary. The sharpest difference was in the unemployment of the dropout.

The girl graduates more often were placed in white collar and clerical fields, while the dropouts held more sales and service jobs (68). A salary of under \$30 a week was earned by 21 per cent of the dropouts and by 6 per cent of the graduates. Nineteen per cent of the girl graduates and 9 per cent of the dropouts were making over \$60 per week.

Job openings will steadily decrease for the unskilled. It is estimated that by 1965 there will be only two unskilled jobs available for every three school dropouts. Automation is forcing employers to raise hiring requirements (42). The average educational attainment for clerical and sales fields is now 12.5 years. The level of schooling is closely related to the job held.

The United States Bureau of Census (28) noted the advantages of the educated worker. More than one-fourth of the families headed by a person with some college training were in the \$10,000-and-over income bracket, but only one-tenth of the families whose head was a high school graduate, and only one-twentieth of the families whose head was an elementary school graduate were in

that bracket. The median income for families headed by persons with an elementary school education was \$4,396; median for high school education heads, \$5,667; and four or more years of college, \$8,143.

Weary (68) stated that in a lifetime, a high school graduate will make \$50,000 more than an eighth grade graduate, and \$30,000 more than the high school dropout. Men who are 25 to 60 years of age, and non-graduates are less likely to be employed than the graduate. The union apprenticeships are more available to the high school graduate.

Dropout Interviews. This technique has been used to try more accurately to evaluate reasons for leaving school. In the Bureau of Labor Survey, the interview was used and the following comparisons were made. Data from the study (69) are reproduced as shown in Fig. 1.

Cook (13) found the reasons for withdrawal among the younger dropouts were meaningless. The reasons given in grades 11 and 12 were more concrete, such as work or marriage. Those who had come through the academic weeding out process had reasons that were non-school connected causes.

Murk (40) was interested in finding out if the students would have liked to continue their schooling. The boys indicated they would have liked to have continued, while most of the girls expressed no regret. Perhaps the economic responsibility placed on the boy as a wage earner may be a contributing factor here.

Reason for Dropping Out of School

| | Total | Reached age 16 | To go to work | Mar- riage | Per cent | Mili- tary service | Adverse school exper- ience | All other |
|--|-------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Boy dropouts | | | | | | | | |
| As given in school records | 100 | 19 | 23 | .. | 15 | 24 | 19 | |
| As given by the dropouts themselves | 100 | 6 | 25 | 11 | 6 | 38 | 25 | |
| Girl dropouts | | | | | | | | |
| As given in school records | 100 | 16 | 13 | 22 | 11 | 21 | 28 | |
| As given by the dropouts themselves | 100 | 4 | 12 | 27 | .. | 31 | 26 | |

Fig. 1

Extra-curricular School Activities. Sando (49) found evidence which points to the fact that the feeling of belonging to the school or peer group is an important factor influencing a student's decision to stay in school. Even membership in an organization outside of school may favor school attendance.

Of 208 dropouts, Snepp (56) found that 79 per cent had avoided participation in extracurricular activities. Dresher (17) and Thomas (60) found this significant also. Thomas found a correlation of .95 between non-participation in extracurricular activities and dropouts.

Student activity groups confer prestige on their members and offer opportunity for leadership. They are more likely to be organized around student interest than is the classroom work. When activity increases or grades improve, so does interest in the whole school program.

School and Personality Adjustment. In using the California Mental Health Analysis, Arnholter (4) found those who graduated to be significantly better adjusted on the total score.

Cook (13) used two tests of personality adjustment and concluded that students who stayed until graduation indicated their adjustment to home was significantly better than that of the withdrawing student. One who has difficulty in keeping friends may not feel comfortable in school. The imagined attraction of independent life may be sufficiently strong to entice him away from school.

Evraiff (20) found that the continuation students were more experienced in certain areas of social experiences, such as going

steady, smoking, and drinking. Their feeling of success in school was lower than the regular boys.

School Dissatisfaction. In an early study by Dillon (15), his findings indicated that the school was responsible for 69 per cent of the reasons that students left before completing their secondary education.

It would be presumed that students who scored low on the mental ability tests might state "adverse school experiences" much more than those who scored higher on the scale. Wolfbein (69) showed that students at both ends of the continuum gave this as a reason for dropping out.

Social Adjustment in the Community. Sorenson (57) studied 16 low ability graduates and nine dropouts, and compared them by income, church, civic, and occupational level. The study was made six years after graduation age so they should have been established in work at this time. The graduates were rated more successful in all categories. The group below 95 I. Q. appears to have profited by continuing in high school to graduate.

School Retention Rates. The variation in retention rates varies from 45 per cent to 89 per cent. Segal (53) stated these possible causes for variations: leniency in providing work permits and enforcement of compulsory school laws; appeal of the school program, both the curriculum and the guidance program; and the types of population, or any combination of these three factors.

Girls stay in school at a substantially higher rate than boys, 60.7 per cent in class B cities and 65.4 per cent in class A cities. The stay-in percentages for boys are 49.5 and 60.2, respectively (53).

Tilroe (61) studied 40 schools, 20 with a high dropout rate, averaging 47.4 per cent, and 20 where the dropout rate averaged 8.8 per cent. He found the highly significant factors associated with low dropout schools to be: programs of family education, integrated activity programs, differentiated courses of study, wide selection of electives, group conferences, exit interviews, parent-student-school conferences, and remedial reading programs.

Future Implications

Identification of the problem is not the same as identifying the causes thereof, recognizing the crucial and agonizing results which flow therefrom or, most importantly, developing increasingly effective solutions for the problem.

Every American is entitled to full-time high school education. We need to be concerned about the frustration, lack of purpose, and sense of failure that leads the average dropout to quit school at legal leaving age. Our concern should make the difference between an unskilled laborer in distress and a satisfactorily and regularly employed youth.

The consensus of ideas appears to be centered on the individuality of the youth. Provide more guidance at an earlier age, increase the possibility of success for every student, provide

constructive work experiences for vocational guidance, improve and vary the curriculum to suit needs of all students, provide cultural experiences for the disadvantaged student, organize additional extracurricular activities, such as hobby clubs, and adjust school curriculum to be more representative of life experiences.

The dropout problem has not been uniquely a problem of our schools or the cities themselves, but is educational, cultural, social, economic, and political. It must be dealt with concurrently on all fronts.

DROPOUT PROBLEM IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

Secondary School Level

During the three school years, 1958-1961, the total dropout rate in the Jefferson County (Colorado) School system was 3.5 per cent for grades 9-12. During the three school years the total potential enrollment of grades 7-12 was 38,071 students. Of this number, 860 boys and 567 girls, or a total of 1,427 students were determined to be dropouts from grades 7-12. Boys were 60.27 per cent of the total and girls accounted for 39.73 per cent. The percentage of average yearly dropouts for grades 7-12 was 3.75 per cent.

A study by Fitzmorris and Slocum (46) for the Jefferson County Schools revealed an average dropout rate of 3.7 for the 1957-58 school year for grades 7-12.

Junior High School

The dropout percentage for Jefferson County, based on potential enrollment for each grade over the period 1958-1961, was as follows:

7th grade - 0.26 per cent

8th grade - 0.63 per cent

9th grade - 3.12 per cent

The three reasons given most frequently by junior high school girls for dropping out of school were: (1) lack of interest, 49 per cent; (2) illness, 21 per cent; (3) marriage, 9 per cent. Girls constituted 32 per cent of the total dropouts.

The three reasons most frequently given by junior high school boys for dropping out of school were: (1) lack of interest, 58 per cent; (2) to work, 25 per cent; (3) to armed forces, 7 per cent. The percentage of boys leaving junior high school was 68 per cent of the total.

Senior High School

The percentage of dropouts of the potential enrollment to each grade in the senior high school was as follows:

10th grade - 6.68 per cent

11th grade - 8.48 per cent

12th grade - 6.54 per cent

Total yearly average - 7.26 per cent

At the senior high school level, 58 per cent were boys and 42 per cent were girls.

The three reasons most frequently given by senior high school boys were: (1) lack of interest, 38 per cent; (2) to work, 32 per cent; (3) to join armed forces, 23 per cent. Others were: request of school, illness, marriage, parental request, and to a trade school.

The three reasons most frequently given by senior high school girls were: (1) marriage, 42 per cent; (2) lack of interest, 29 per cent; (3) to work, 18 per cent.

ATTITUDE SURVEY OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

Method

An attitude survey was conducted among 40 dropouts from all ten Jefferson County Junior High Schools. The number of dropouts interview from each school was determined by the enrollment of the school in respect to the total number enrolled in the junior high schools in Jefferson County. For example, Alameda Junior High School with an enrollment of 467 had 7 per cent of the total junior high school enrollment in Jefferson County. The survey included 40 subjects; therefore, the subjects interviewed from Alameda Junior High School would be represented by 7 per cent of 40, or three students who had dropped out of school.

The number of students interviewed from each school is as follows: Alameda Junior High, three; Arvada Junior High, six; Bear Creek Junior High, four; Belmont Junior High, three; Drake Junior High, three; Evergreen Junior High, two; Golden Junior

High, six; Lakewood Junior High, five; West Jefferson Junior High, one; and Wheat Ridge Junior High, seven.

The dropouts from each school were placed in chronological order according to date of leaving school. Selections were made at intervals to sample dropouts leaving school at various periods of the school year.

An instrument was constructed modeled after the Sacks Sentence Completion Test (Abt, 1). This test consisted of a number of incomplete sentences presented to the subjects for completion. Sacks selected his sentences to explore significant areas of an individual's adjustment or for the purpose of investigating some specific cluster of attitudes. After the subjects gave their responses, psychologists judged the degree of disturbance, whether the response indicated severe disturbance, mild disturbance, no disturbance, or insufficient evidence.

In this survey, the open-end sentence was not used; however, by using the same basic plan of grouping and distribution of sentence stems the author constructed an instrument of 40 items. The five responses were projected to range from extremely negative through extremely positive. The responses were constructed to include the complete range of feelings that were being sampled.

An instrument was constructed consisting of 40 items, of which five represented each of the following eight areas: peer relationships, self concept, future goals, authority figures, family relationships, attitude toward school, attitude toward guidance and counseling, and attitude toward school programs and curriculum.

Each of the eight areas had five stems scattered throughout the instrument. The responses were arranged in the following order for each sequence of five stems, using "one" to represent an extremely positive response to a "five" representing an extremely negative response. This was repeated for each set of five thereafter. The order of sequence was as follows:

Sentence Number 1. 5 3 1 4 2

Sentence Number 2. 3 1 4 2 5

Sentence Number 3. 1 4 2 5 3

Sentence Number 4. 4 2 5 3 1

Sentence Number 5. 2 5 3 1 4

The survey blank may be found in the Appendix.

The eight categories, the stems related to each, their placement number on the survey instrument, and the tabulation for each stem are presented in Table 1.

Results

Peer Relationships. Fifty-six per cent of the responses in this category were positive; 20 per cent chose responses that were neutral; and 24 per cent chose negative responses.

Self-Concept. The largest percentage, 40, had negative attitudes in self-concept. Stems that were noticeable were numbers 34 and 10. Twenty-nine out of 40 subjects felt their teachers had a negative attitude toward them. Twenty-seven out of 40 felt they were academically weak. Sixty per cent of the subjects limited their responses to the neutral concerning their ability in item 2.

Table 1. Responses in interviews of 40 dropouts from Jefferson County Junior High Schools.

| Areas of investigation | | :Extremely: Mildly : Mildly :Extremely :positive:positive:Neutral:negative | | | | |
|--|-----|---|----|----|----|--|
| I. Peer Relationships | | | | | | |
| 1. At school the kids I got along best with ... | 3 | 26 | 2 | 7 | 2 | |
| 9. I didn't like kids who ... | 9 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 20 | |
| 17. I feel a real friend ... | 21 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 5 | |
| 25. When I'm not around, my friends ... | 6 | 19 | 14 | 1 | 0 | |
| 33. My friends ... | 13 | 2 | 15 | 5 | 4 | |
| Total number | 111 | | 40 | | 49 | |
| Total per cent | 56 | | 20 | | 24 | |
| II. Self-concept | | | | | | |
| 2. I believe I have the ability to ... | 3 | 9 | 24 | 0 | 4 | |
| 10. I am very weak in ... | 3 | 5 | 5 | 20 | 7 | |
| 18. Kids dislike me because ... | 5 | 16 | 4 | 9 | 6 | |
| 26. I'm good at ... | 0 | 15 | 20 | 3 | 2 | |
| 34. Teachers thought I ... | 4 | 3 | 4 | 22 | 7 | |
| Total number | 63 | | 57 | | 80 | |
| Total per cent | 31 | | 29 | | 40 | |
| III. Future Goals | | | | | | |
| 4. Someday I ... | 11 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 8 | |
| 11. I look forward to ... | 6 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 2 | |
| 19. In five years, I'd like to ... | 4 | 1 | 18 | 9 | 8 | |
| 27. I would like to work with people who ... | 9 | 7 | 3 | 11 | 10 | |
| 35. Those who stay in school ... | 10 | 15 | 4 | 2 | 9 | |
| Total number | 90 | | 38 | | 72 | |
| Total per cent | 45 | | 19 | | 36 | |

Table 1 (cont.).

| Areas of investigation | | :Extremely: Mildly : Mildly :Extremely :positive :positive:Neutral:negative:negative | | | | |
|--|-----|---|----|----|----|--|
| IV. Authority Figure | | | | | | |
| 3. When I used to see a teacher coming ... | 4 | 6 | 22 | 6 | 1 | |
| 12. When a teacher corrected me ... | 7 | 17 | 8 | 5 | 3 | |
| 20. Teachers are ... | 4 | 8 | 15 | 4 | 9 | |
| 28. Principals ... | 7 | 7 | 19 | 4 | 3 | |
| 36. The nicest thing a teacher did ... | 9 | 14 | 4 | 12 | 1 | |
| Total number | 84 | | 68 | | 48 | |
| Total per cent | 42 | | 34 | | 24 | |
| V. Family Relationships | | | | | | |
| 5. When my mother understood I was quitting school ... | 6 | 21 | 4 | 7 | 2 | |
| 13. The attitude of my father about school was ... | 6 | 16 | 13 | 2 | 3 | |
| 21. At home ... | 10 | 23 | 4 | 0 | 3 | |
| 29. When my father understood I was quitting school ... | 3 | 19 | 10 | 8 | 0 | |
| 37. The attitude of my mother about school was ... | 11 | 20 | 6 | 0 | 3 | |
| Total number | 135 | | 37 | | 28 | |
| Total per cent | 67 | | 19 | | 14 | |
| VI. Attitude Toward School | | | | | | |
| 6. The best thing about school was ... | 2 | 17 | 8 | 8 | 5 | |
| 14. If I went back to school again ... | 5 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 5 | |
| 22. Before I quit school ... | 5 | 7 | 16 | 6 | 6 | |
| 30. I feel as I do about school because ... | 3 | 11 | 7 | 12 | 7 | |
| 38. If I had stayed in school ... | 12 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 2 | |
| Total number | 86 | | 44 | | 70 | |
| Total per cent | 43 | | 22 | | 35 | |

Table 3 (concl.).

| Areas of investigation | | :Extremely: Wildly : :positive:positive:Neutral:negative:negative | | | | |
|---|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|--|
| VII. Attitude Toward Guidance and Counseling | | | | | | |
| 7. My experience with the counselor (dean) ... | 2 | 10 | 14 | 8 | 6 | |
| 15. The school counselor (dean) ... | 3 | 9 | 16 | 6 | 6 | |
| 23. I believe counselors (deans) ... | 15 | 4 | 11 | 10 | 0 | |
| 31. The counselor (dean) expressed ... | 5 | 16 | 3 | 8 | 6 | |
| 39. Counselors (deans) shouldn't ... | 0 | 11 | 6 | 8 | 15 | |
| Total number | 77 | | 50 | | 73 | |
| Total per cent | 38 | | 25 | | 37 | |
| VIII. Attitude Toward School Program and Curriculum | | | | | | |
| 8. In choosing my subjects ... | 5 | 8 | 11 | 9 | 7 | |
| 16. Most teachers ... | 11 | 9 | 14 | 3 | 3 | |
| 24. The kind of school I would like to attend ... | 15 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 6 | |
| 32. Reading for me has usually been ... | 9 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 5 | |
| 40. The social life of the school ... | 4 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 5 | |
| Total number | 89 | | 55 | | 56 | |
| Total per cent | 44 | | 28 | | 28 | |
| IX. Total Responses for All Areas | | | | | | |
| Total number | 270 | 465 | 389 | 270 | 206 | |
| Total per cent | 735 | | 389 | | 476 | |
| | 46 | | 24 | | 30 | |

Future Goals. Forty-five per cent of the subjects had positive feelings about their future goals; 19 per cent were neutral; and 36 per cent had negative feelings. The subject's attitude toward job success in the next five years was decidedly neutral and negative. Only five of the 40 anticipated more than dependability of a job.

Authority Figure. Forty-two per cent had accepting attitudes toward authority. Twenty-four per cent revealed negative feelings. In item number 12, 80 per cent of the subjects appeared to be acceptable to corrections.

Family Relationships. This area carried the highest percentage of positive answers, totaling 67 per cent. Some stems demonstrated an extremely favorable family relationship. The mother's desire for them to stay in school was expressed more strongly than the father's.

Attitude Toward School. Forty-three per cent of the choices in this category were positive. The pattern was spread quite consistently throughout each alternative. However, 35 per cent were negative in their attitude toward school.

Attitude Toward Guidance and Counseling. A negative response was given by 37 per cent of the dropouts, with positive answers by 38 per cent. In item number 31, 57 per cent felt that the counselor was understanding. In item 39, 57 per cent felt that the counselor was demanding and domineering.

Attitude Toward School Program and Curriculum. Forty-four per cent of the subjects were positive about the school program.

The neutral and negative responses were 27 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively. Item number 24 showed that 60 per cent of the subjects related an interest for self-improvement by choosing a suitable school.

Discussion

The study was conducted with students who had dropped out of school during the year 1962-63. It was noted that the most recent dropouts appeared more negative than the ones who had been out of school for a period of time, indicating that a time lapse may have lessened the amount of hostility toward the school.

The dropout was found to have a favorable picture of himself in relationship to his peers, but was inadequately equipped with a good self-concept. Since self-concept and behavior are closely related, it is not unusual that this was found among students who had not been successful in the school setting.

The stem, teachers thought I ..., brought negative responses indicating the dropout felt unsure of his ability in relationship to those with whom he had to work. The dropout did not appear to resent the correction of a teacher, indicating that he was not too disturbed when being corrected.

The dropout indicated that those who did stay in school would profit from the experience in the future. His own future, when given a specific time such as five years, did not elicit as many positive responses as when the future was referred to in a more vague sense as, someday I ...

The dropout did not express negative feelings about his home. He also felt that his parents wished to have him continue with school. The mother expressed more strongly than the father her wishes for the student to stay in school. The subjects in this study did not express a negative parental attitude as was found in the study by Schreiber (52).

Summary and Interpretation

The first part of this report reviewed the current literature on the dropout problem on a nation-wide basis. The second section reviewed the problem in Jefferson County, Colorado, where the rate was slightly lower than the national average (46). A data-gathering instrument was constructed to secure information concerning the attitudes of the dropouts in Jefferson County Junior High Schools for the year 1962-63.

Forty dropouts from the ten schools were interviewed in this study. An attempt was made to evaluate the attitude of these dropouts toward their peer relationships, self-concepts, future goals, authority figure, family relationships, attitude toward school, attitude toward the counseling and guidance programs, and the attitude toward the school program and curriculum. The information-gathering instrument was constructed of 40 items, each with five fixed alternatives. With this instrument, the subjects expressed their attitudes which were tabulated to find the trend in the eight areas of evaluation.

The results indicated that the dropout chose positive responses more often than negative responses in six of the eight areas. The area of self-concept carried more negative than positive responses. The area of family relationships was the most highly positive of all eight areas of investigation.

The responses toward the counseling and guidance program displayed that perhaps the role of the counselor is not clearly defined. Although the counselor was projected as an understanding person in 57 per cent of the replies, he was also seen as demanding and domineering in 57 per cent of the inquiries. This may indicate that the services of the counselor need to be more consistent with the image that the student now holds.

It would seem from the replies of dropouts from Jefferson County Junior High Schools that retention might be improved by the development of the school program and increased effectiveness in four areas in particular: self concept, future goals, the school program and curriculum, and guidance and counseling. In these areas the replies of the dropout were negative in 35 to 40 per cent of the cases.

The individuality of youth is to be considered in providing guidance at an appropriate age so as to increase the possibility of success of every student. There is a need for provisions in the curriculum to suit the needs of all the students in the program and for each student to develop a feeling of individual worth with a projected goal that will allow him to adjust satisfactorily to the future community.

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APPENDIX

Survey of Attitudes by checking correct answers

Please check one answer, only.

1. At school, the kids I got along best with ...
 - ☐ I didn't get along with hardly any of the kids.
 - ☐ are the ones I left alone.
 - ☐ saw things my way.
 - ☐ were very few.
 - ☐ were the ones that we enjoyed doing most things together.
2. I believe I have the ability to ...
 - ☐ do about the same as anyone else.
 - ☐ really get somewhere in life.
 - ☐ I don't really expect to get too far.
 - ☐ accomplish quite a bit.
 - ☐ it doesn't make much difference what happens to me.
3. When I used to see a teacher coming ...
 - ☐ I felt they like me.
 - ☐ I felt uneasy.
 - ☐ I felt free to speak to them.
 - ☐ I hated them.
 - ☐ it didn't bother me.
4. Someday I ...
 - ☐ will prove school didn't help me too much.
 - ☐ will recognize what I missed by discontinuing school.
 - ☐ will make a success in spite of leaving school.
 - ☐ will leave school to those who want it for themselves.
 - ☐ plan to go back to school and work harder.
5. When my mother understood I was quitting school ...
 - ☐ she would rather I had stayed in school.
 - ☐ urged me to quit if I felt like it.
 - ☐ she didn't care.
 - ☐ she appealed to me to stay in school.
 - ☐ she agreed to my decisions.
6. The best thing about school was ...
 - ☐ there is not a good thing about school.
 - ☐ I don't really know, or haven't given it much thought.
 - ☐ it was the best part of the day.
 - ☐ not very many things.
 - ☐ most everything was satisfactory.
7. My experience with the counselor (dean) ...
 - ☐ I had no experience with the counselor or this experience meant nothing to me.
 - ☐ has been very helpful.
 - ☐ wasn't too helpful.
 - ☐ was helpful.
 - ☐ I didn't need his help.

8. In choosing my subjects ...
___ I got a good schedule.
___ I had to take quite a few subjects I didn't like.
___ I enjoyed most of the subjects.
___ I was forced to take several subjects I didn't like.
___ they were alright.
9. I didn't like kids who ...
___ didn't agree with me.
___ most of them went along with me.
___ thought they were better than I was or felt superior.
___ seemed to accept me as I was.
___ I got along with all the kids at school.
10. I am very weak in ...
___ a very few things.
___ most school things.
___ I can't think of anything.
___ hardly anything.
___ some school (subjects) things.
11. I look forward to ...
___ an unhappy life.
___ I haven't thought much about it.
___ a very successful life.
___ not too much success.
___ quite a bit of success in life.
12. When a teacher corrected me ...
___ I didn't mind it.
___ I felt they were helping me.
___ I didn't like it.
___ I accepted it.
___ I felt they had it in for me.
13. The attitude of my father about school was ...
___ he had much interest in school.
___ that the school should do more for me.
___ that he thought education was a good thing.
___ that he thought schools were not run right.
___ that he didn't care much about it.
14. If I went back to school again ...
___ I probably wouldn't go back.
___ I might try harder.
___ I just wouldn't go back to school at all.
___ I hadn't considered it.
___ I'd enjoy it.

15. The school counselor (dean) ...
___ tried to be understanding.
___ could not change me any.
___ was O.K., I guess.
___ has influenced me quite a bit.
___ should try to be more understanding.
16. Most teachers ...
___ didn't know what they were doing.
___ did a pretty good job.
___ knew how to teach their subjects well.
___ were confused most of the time.
___ taught their subjects fairly well.
17. I feel a real friend ...
___ is just a friend.
___ will stick with me through anything.
___ is only one who can use you somehow.
___ will do what he can to help you.
___ there isn't any thing as a "real" friend.
18. Kids dislike me because ...
___ none dislike me.
___ they don't understand me.
___ there aren't many who dislike me.
___ they just hate me and/or I irritate them.
___ I don't know why they don't like me.
19. In five years, I'd like to ...
___ do whatever comes along.
___ be a supervisor or boss over some people.
___ I'm not thinking about that now.
___ have a steady or dependable job.
___ own a business of my own.
20. Teachers are ...
___ pleasant.
___ usually very crabby.
___ necessary.
___ very admirable people.
___ too independent.
21. At home ...
___ I hate home.
___ we do as we wish.
___ we all consider one another.
___ I feel left out.
___ we get along pretty well.

22. Before I quit school ...
_____ things were about as they are now.
_____ I got along a lot better than I do now.
_____ things weren't too good for me.
_____ I did get along a little better before I left school.
_____ things never went well for me.
23. I believe counselors (deans) ...
_____ are necessary or a "must" for a well-run school.
_____ are not needed too much.
_____ help the teachers quite a bit.
_____ hurt the teaching staff a lot.
_____ do about what's expected of them.
24. The kind of school I would like to attend ...
_____ I might as well be going to some school as doing anything else.
_____ is one which will help me to make a good living.
_____ I'm not interested in ever going to school again.
_____ is one that will help me to get a job.
_____ is one that will help me to improve myself.
25. When I'm not around, my friends ...
_____ clue me in later as to what goes on.
_____ talk about me.
_____ carry on as usual.
_____ express that they miss me.
_____ don't miss me.
26. I'm good at ...
_____ fouling up the works.
_____ going along with others.
_____ getting things organized and going.
_____ I'm usually extra baggage.
_____ helping out to get a job done.
27. I would like to work with people who ...
_____ let others do as they please.
_____ get things done and are well organized.
_____ aren't too bossy.
_____ enjoy their work.
_____ don't push me around.
28. Principals ...
_____ have gone out of their way to help me.
_____ didn't care much for me.
_____ seemed to understand my problems.
_____ had it in for me and picked on me.
_____ do their job and that is it.

29. When my father understood I was quitting school ...
____ he agreed to my decisions.
____ he would rather I had stayed in school.
____ he urged me to quit if I felt like it.
____ he didn't care.
____ he appealed to me to stay in school.
30. I feel as I do about school because ...
____ they tried to help me.
____ they mistreated me.
____ I have gone to a good school.
____ everyone was helpful.
____ they weren't interested in me.
31. The counselor (dean) expressed ...
____ an attitude of criticism toward me.
____ an usual attitude toward me.
____ a very helpful attitude toward me.
____ little attention toward me.
____ a friendly attitude toward me.
32. Reading for me has usually been ...
____ good enough to get by.
____ very easy and one of my most enjoyable subjects.
____ difficult for me.
____ fairly good.
____ the thing I disliked a lot.
33. My friends ...
____ encouraged me to stay in school.
____ care little about school.
____ feel school is helpful.
____ feel I did right by quitting school.
____ never say much about school.
34. Teachers thought I ...
____ didn't care.
____ was a good person and/or studious.
____ was a trouble maker.
____ was agreeable.
____ tried hard.
35. Those who stay in school ...
____ may have a better chance.
____ are studying things they will never use in later life.
____ will probably get as far as the next one.
____ will get much further in life.
____ will probably not use their schooling.

36. The nicest thing a teacher did ...

- ___ I have never had a teacher treat me nice.
- ___ was to be aware that I was present.
- ___ was to make me feel worthwhile.
- ___ it's hard to remember nice things they did.
- ___ was to make me feel acceptable.

37. The attitude of my mother about school was ...

- ___ that she didn't care much about it.
- ___ she had much interest in school.
- ___ that the school should do more for me.
- ___ that she thought education was a good thing.
- ___ that she thought schools were not run right.

38. If I had stayed in school ...

- ___ I'd be a lot better off now.
- ___ it would have been a waste of time.
- ___ it may have helped me some.
- ___ I'd be a most unhappy person.
- ___ I would have just been going to be doing something.

39. Counselors (deans) shouldn't ...

- ___ give too many suggestions.
- ___ be too easy going.
- ___ be so demanding.
- ___ change from what they are.
- ___ be so agreeable.

40. The social life of the school ...

- ___ pleased most of the kids.
- ___ was sadly lacking.
- ___ was suitable for the kids.
- ___ was well organized and a lot of fun.
- ___ didn't go over with most of the kids.

THE DROPOUT PROBLEM AND THE ATTITUDES OF DROPOUTS
OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, COLORADO

by

ESMER D. VERBAL

B. A., Friends University, 1959

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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A multiplicity of studies has been conducted to determine factors that influence the early school leaver. These studies have sought to identify characteristics or factors that would allow the school to provide adjusted curricula that would prevent withdrawal from school.

Other studies have attempted to compare the early school leavers with their contemporaries who graduate. In comparing the two groups, it was hoped that such comparisons covering selected personal characteristics and educational and social factors, would identify traits that would differentiate between the two groups.

The study was made to review the literature on the dropout problem nationally and to learn about the dropout problem in Jefferson County, Colorado. Dropouts from selected junior high schools in Jefferson County were administered a data-gathering instrument which indicated positive or negative attitudes toward peer relationships, self-concepts, future goals, authority figures, family relationships, attitudes toward schools, attitudes toward the counseling and guidance program, and attitudes toward the school programs and curriculum.

The review of literature revealed that less than two-thirds of those in the ninth grade remain to graduation.

Early studies emphasized social and economic factors, while recent studies emphasized educational factors.

Studies were reviewed emphasizing the socioeconomic factor. Evidence was found to support the relationship between low family

income and dropouts; however, a few studies did not substantiate this premise.

Other studies were reviewed concerning the dropout in the area of pupil mobility, grade retention, intelligence, age of leaving school, post-school jobs and earnings, reasons for dropouts by interviews, extra-school activities, school and personality adjustment, school dissatisfaction, social adjustment in the community, and school retention rates.

Implications appear to emphasize the need for guidance at an earlier age, increased possibility of success for every student, provision of constructive work experience, improvement of the curriculum, and adjustment of the school curriculum to be more representative of life experiences.

The second part of the report presented the information gathered in a survey of attitudes of 40 dropouts. The subjects chose positive responses more often than negative responses in six of the eight areas. The area of family relationships was the most highly positive, and the area of self-concept received the most negative responses.

The replies from the dropouts from Jefferson County junior high schools indicate that retention might be improved by the development of the school program and increased effectiveness in four areas in particular: self-concept, future goals, the school program and curriculum, and guidance and counseling. In these areas the replies of the dropout were negative in 35 to 40 per cent of the cases.

The individuality of youth is to be considered in providing guidance at an appropriate age so as to increase the possibility of success of every student. There is a need for provisions in the curriculum to suit the needs of all students in the program and for each student to develop a feeling of individual worth with a projected goal that will allow him to adjust satisfactorily to the future community.